

THE HEART OF A WOMAN

—BY—
BARONESS ORCZY

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CHAPTER IV.—Continued.

"Who was that?" asked Louisa, when the passerby was out of earshot.

"I don't know," replied Luke. "I thought it was some one you knew. He bowed to you."

"No," she said, "to you, I think. Funny you should not know him."

But silence once broken, constraint fell.

this young man asserts is all true, it will make a world of difference to you."

"I know that. That's just the trouble."

"You were thinking of yourself?"

"No. I was thinking of you."

"Of me?"

"Yes," he said, now very abrupt and quite roughly and crudely not choosing his words, lest they helped to betray what he felt and all that he felt. "If you

with it. She drew nearer to Luke and once more her hand sought his coat sleeve, with a light pressure quickly withdrawn.

"Now, Luke," she said, abruptly, reverting to the subject, "how do you stand in all this?"

"I?"

"Yes. What does Lord Radcliffe say?"

"He laughs the whole thing to scorn, and declares that the man is an impudent liar."

"He saw," she asked, "the first letter? The one that came from St. Vincent?"

"Yes. Mr. Warren and I did not think we ought to keep it from him."

"Of course not," she assented. "Then he said that the letter was a tissue of lies?"

"This man says is true, then I am a personless nonentity, whom you are not going to marry?"

"You are talking nonsense, Luke," she said. "You know it," was all she said. And she said it very quietly, very decidedly.

"I was talking nonsense, of course, whatever happened or didn't happen; but there was one thing in the world that was absolutely unchangeably impossible—that was that she should not marry me," Luke said.

"While she, Louisa Harris, p.ain, uninteresting, commonplace Louisa Harris was of this world, her marriage with Luke must be. People in this present day are not fastidious about their hearts wrenched out of them; they would not made to suffer impossible and endurable tortures, to be able to marry Louisa Harris, be threatened with a cataclysm?"

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seems far to me, doesn't it to you?"

"Very far, indeed," she murmured.

"What I mean," he added, with great conviction, is that if those papers weren't all right, he wouldn't be a fit person for Uncle Rad's solicitors to have a look at them, would he?"

"No."

And after awhile she reiterated more emphatically:

"Certainly not."

"I must say," he concluded, "that the whole thing simply beats me."

"But what does Lord Radcliffe say now?"

"Nothing."

"How do you mean, nothing?"

"I don't say any. He won't talk about the answer. He won't discuss it. He won't answer any question which I put to him. He won't say the man is palpable, impudent impostor, a black-maler, and that's all I can get out of him."

"He won't hear of it."

"He won't see the man?"

"He won't hear his solicitor," Mr. Dobson said—it met the other lawyer's."

"He says he wouldn't dream of wasting old Dobson's time."

"Then what's going to happen?"

"Don't see," he said, "what is going to happen."

"Won't you have a talk about it all with Mr. Dobson and see what he says?" "I can't very well do that," said Lulu, speaking, "it's none of my business," yet I couldn't consult Uncle Rad's lawyers without Uncle Rad's consent."

"Mother, then."

He shrugged his shoulders, obviously undecided what to do. He had thought very little about the matter, or its nature in all this; his thoughts had dwelt mostly on Lord Radelyffe—father, mother, brother, sister to them all. Bless him! And then he had thought of her. He had been round him with eyes that scarcely saw, for they really were turned inward to his own little soul, and to his loving heart. Right up against that very simplicity of soul a duty stood clear and uncompromising. Duty, duty, duty, to be performed, the real man and end of all that he had said so far. But he did not know how best to perform such a duty.

And then, in the complex psychological phenomena of modern times—are apt to be selfless, to think more of others than of themselves, to sacrifice their own various sensations; and Lulu knew that what he considered his duty could not be so obvious to Louisa, and that by fulfilling it he would give her pain.

CHAPTER V.
Just an Obvious Duty.

But it was she who gave him an opening.

"Luke," she said, "it's all very well, but the matter does concern you in a way; far more so, in fact, than it does Lord Radelyffe. Naturally, but if what

years.

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